

# Capital Region Food Charter

***Vision: a sustainable and secure local food and agriculture system that provides safe, sufficient, culturally accepted, nutritious food accessible to everyone in the Capital Region through dignified means.***

## ***Principles for Food and Health in the Capital Region:***

### **Nutritious Food Is Essential for a Healthy Population**

- No one in the Capital Region should go hungry as safe, nutritious food is a basic right of everyone.
- Access to healthy foods, coupled with good eating practices, are important factors in determining the overall health of CRD residents.
- Neighbourhood access to nutritious food increases the likelihood that people will have healthy diets and should therefore be part of community planning.
- Shifting from emergency food provision to food self-reliance, including nutritional education and skills training programs are important for increasing the health of CRD residents.

### **Localized Food Systems Contribute to the Social and Economic Health of the Community**

- Fresh food produced close to home is the foundation of our regional food system.
  - Sustainable food production is an integral part of the economy of the Capital Region and surrounding area.
  - Farmland should be used for food production using good stewardship practices, for the social and economic benefit of the region as a whole.
  - Regional food products must be fostered through support for and promotion of farmers markets, farm gate sales, local food outlets, and local products, including within our food service industry and public institutions.
  - Ensuring that local farmers/workers and processors receive a fair price/wage for their products/labour is integral to the sustainability of food production in our region.

### **A Sustainable Food System Fosters Resilience to Global Warming and Supports Long-term Environmental Health**

- Food must be produced, processed and distributed in a way that is environmentally sustainable.
- Producing food locally/regionally is an important way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with food transportation/food miles.
- Local farmland is a precious resource that must be protected to ensure long-term food production capacity in the face of an uncertain climatic future.
- Local farmland also plays a multifunctional role in terms of protecting watersheds and wildlife, and in providing green space and viewsapes. These values must be recognized and supported.
- Initiatives that encourage bio-diversity, soil fertility, soil conservation, zero-waste, and minimization of environmentally-persistent, unhealthy chemicals must be supported.

### **Planning a Local Food System Is Part of Planning for the Future**

- Farmers must be supported and local farmland recognized as essential for our long-term food production capacity.
- Fresh water and marine eco-systems must be protected, and sustainable harvesting practices encouraged.
- Communities' traditional, scientific, and Indigenous knowledge and practices must be respected and protected both in their own right, and because, they contribute to the genetic diversity and seed fertility that are the cornerstones of our ability to feed ourselves.
- Income, employment, housing, transportation, health and recreation policies must be congruent with attaining greater food security for all CRD residents.
- A strong commitment to local food will support emergency preparedness and the endurance of our communities in the face of climate change, uncertain global food production, and environmental or economic disruptions.

## **Healthy Food Systems Are Integral to a Resilient Community**

- Food brings people together in the celebration of family, friendship and community. It also strengthens links between diverse cultures and communities.
- Food security contributes to the physical, mental, cultural, spiritual and emotional well being of our region's residents.
- Food self-reliance is strengthened through community-based food programs, such as community gardens, fresh food box programs and collective kitchens.
- Food security means that our region takes responsibility for growing and processing the food we need and looks to a trade regime that fosters social justice, environmental sustainability, and community development throughout the world.
- Domestic and local ownership of our food supply is critical for the region's future.
- Healthy local food systems involve the active stewardship of all sectors of the community: public, private, and voluntary.

**Working towards these principles is the responsibility of individuals, organizations, business and community associations, institutions, authorities, and local and regional governments in BC's Capital Region.**

The Capital Region Food Charter honours Canada's commitments to global and local food security. This includes the *United Nations Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights* specifying the right of everyone to adequate food, and *Canada's Action Plan for Food Security*. The Action Plan states: "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger" and "food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."

***Therefore, to develop and promote food security in the Capital Region in accordance with the Capital Region Food Charter, in ways that we are able, we can:***

1. Promote and support the right of all residents to healthy food.
2. Advocate for income, employment, housing, and transportation policies that support access to food.
3. Promote eating locally grown food as a way to increase consumption of fresh foods, reduce "food miles" and increase local economic stability.
4. Protect productive farmland in our region and support strategies to make it accessible for farming.
5. Protect our fresh water and marine ecosystems and promote sustainable harvesting practices.
6. Ensure appropriate quality and supply of water for agricultural and home use.
7. Promote convenient access to healthy and affordable foods at the neighborhood level.
8. Work with consumers, municipalities, and institutions to promote healthy food purchasing practices that support local farm and food businesses.
9. Promote partnerships and programs that support rural-urban food links through farmers' markets, the Box Programs and other rural-urban initiatives.
10. Support incentives to enhance environmental values, and recognize the multifunctionality of farms.
11. Support and encourage urban agriculture through community gardens, backyard and rooftop gardens, and city fruit trees.
12. Support strategies for regional waste disposal and composting systems that recycle nutrients for regional food production.
13. Support training and income-generating programs that promote farming and food security within a community economic development model.
14. Support health and nutrition promotion strategies that encourage and increase the health status and self-reliance of all members of the population.
15. Work proactively to achieve these goals through the Regional Food and Health Action Plan as well as support a regular community food security assessment on the Capital Region's progress towards food security.
16. Work proactively to achieve and support a Regional Food Council to support planning, policy and ongoing decision making in support of this Regional Food Charter

**Everyone in the Capital Region has a role in creating a healthy local food system.**

These actions will be achieved by the choices of individuals and the actions both alone and through working together with local, regional, provincial, federal and First Nations governments, community-based organizations, community associations, farm organizations, food processing and food service businesses and organizations, Aboriginal peoples, resident groups, business organizations, trade unions, educational and health institutions.

**Sign-on**

**The Vision of this Charter will live and breathe through individual and collaborative support and action.**

**On behalf of \_\_\_\_\_, I/we, \_\_\_\_\_ support the vision of the Regional Food Charter.**

**Signed this \_\_\_\_\_ day, \_\_\_\_\_ month \_\_\_\_\_ year.**

This proposal for a Capital Region Food Charter was developed through the Capital Region Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable (CR-FAIR).

For more information, and to be involved in this exciting initiative, contact CR-FAIR at (250) 383-6166 or email [info@communitycouncil.ca](mailto:info@communitycouncil.ca).

To access the **2008 Capital Region Food and Health Action Plan**, both the summary and full document, and for background information the *2004 Baseline Assessment of Food Security in British Columbia's Capital Region* see [www.communitycouncil.ca](http://www.communitycouncil.ca)

We offer the following definitions:

**Food security:** In a food secure community, the growing, processing and distribution of healthy, safe food is economically viable, socially just, environmentally friendly and regionally based.

**Food system:** The food system is the path of food from field to plate, including production, distribution, marketing, preparation, consumption and disposal.

**Food miles:** The distance between food's point of production and consumption, a broader definition includes all of the energy required from seed to plate. This measurement is increasingly recognized in its relationship to climate change.